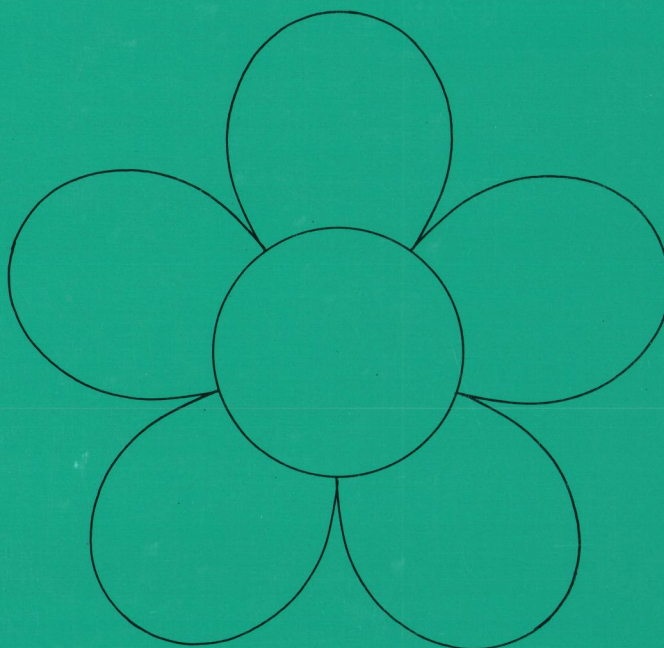


DE AGRARISCHE VROUW EN HAAR GEZONDHEID IN DE EG

The woman farmer and her health in EC
L'agricultrice et sa santé dans la CE

VOORNAAMSTE ONDERZOEKSRESULTATEN VOOR:
SEMINAR COPA cf 1990



Werkgroep Vrouwen van de COPA Nederland /
Centrale van Plattelandsvrouwenorganisaties

Wetenschapswinkel

Vakgroep Voorlichtingskunde

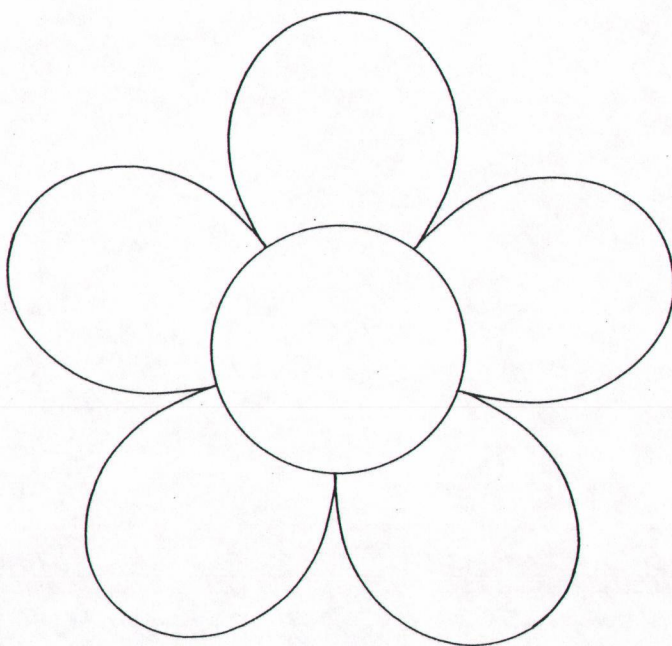


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THE WOMAN FARMER AND HER HEALTH IN THE EC
L'AGRICULTRICE ET SA SANTE DANS LA CE

Wageningen, april 1990

Clothilde Bun

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The Dutch delegation of CCPA Commission Féminine / Federation of Countrywomen's Associations

The Comité des Organisations Agricoles is the coordinating organization of farmers' organizations in the EC member states. The CCPA Commission Féminine is part of CCPA. The Dutch delegation of the CCPA Commission Féminine cooperates in the Federation of Countrywomen's Associations. In the Netherlands they represent women farmers organized in farmers organizations or countrywomen's associations.

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The Science Shop acts as a mediator for research applications from financially weak organizations in the farming sector. Special attention is given to the situation of women. If necessary research is carried out under the authority of the Science Shop, which takes care of the organization and supervision.

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PREFACE

In the middle of 1989 The Dutch delegation of the COPA women's committee and the Federation of Countrywomen made an application for research at the 'science shop' of the Agricultural University in Wageningen.

On behalf of the seminar 'The Woman Farmer and her Health', to be held in the Netherlands in 1990, a good inquiry taking stock of the situation was needed. Supplementary information could be gathered from literature on the subject.

The Department of Information Studies was willing to supervise the investigation and supervision was conducted by Fanny Heymann M.Sc.

Procedural and practical supervision was given by Liesbeth Klaver and Ans Hobbelink M.Sc., both working in the 'science shop'.

In preparing and carrying out the investigation the research group was assisted by the COPA working party and the Federation of Countrywomen. This group was made up of the following persons:

Anjo Geluk-Geluk

Jansje Otten-Scheer

Arja Romeijn-Eijkelenboom

Agnes van Heel M.Sc.

Stien Verwey-Scharleman

Together with the above mentioned persons and the research group they made up the supervisory committee of the investigation.

The findings presented to you in this paper are the result of great enthusiasm and efforts of the research group. Report no. 40 (Unseen is not well, The Woman Farmer and Her Health in the EC, 1990) clarifies the insights gained from literature.

The research group was made up of the following persons:

Josje Weijters

André Oldenkamp

Agnes Oldenziel

Clothilde Bun

Anneke van de Veer.

The paper presented to you now is the outcome of both literature study and enquiry and aims to stimulate the discussion and forming of opinions at the seminar 'The Woman Farmer and her Health in the EC'

We make acknowledgments to all persons involved in the realization of this material.

Anjo Geluk-Geluk (Dutch delegation of the COPA Women's Committee)

Fanny Heymann (Department of Extension Sciences)

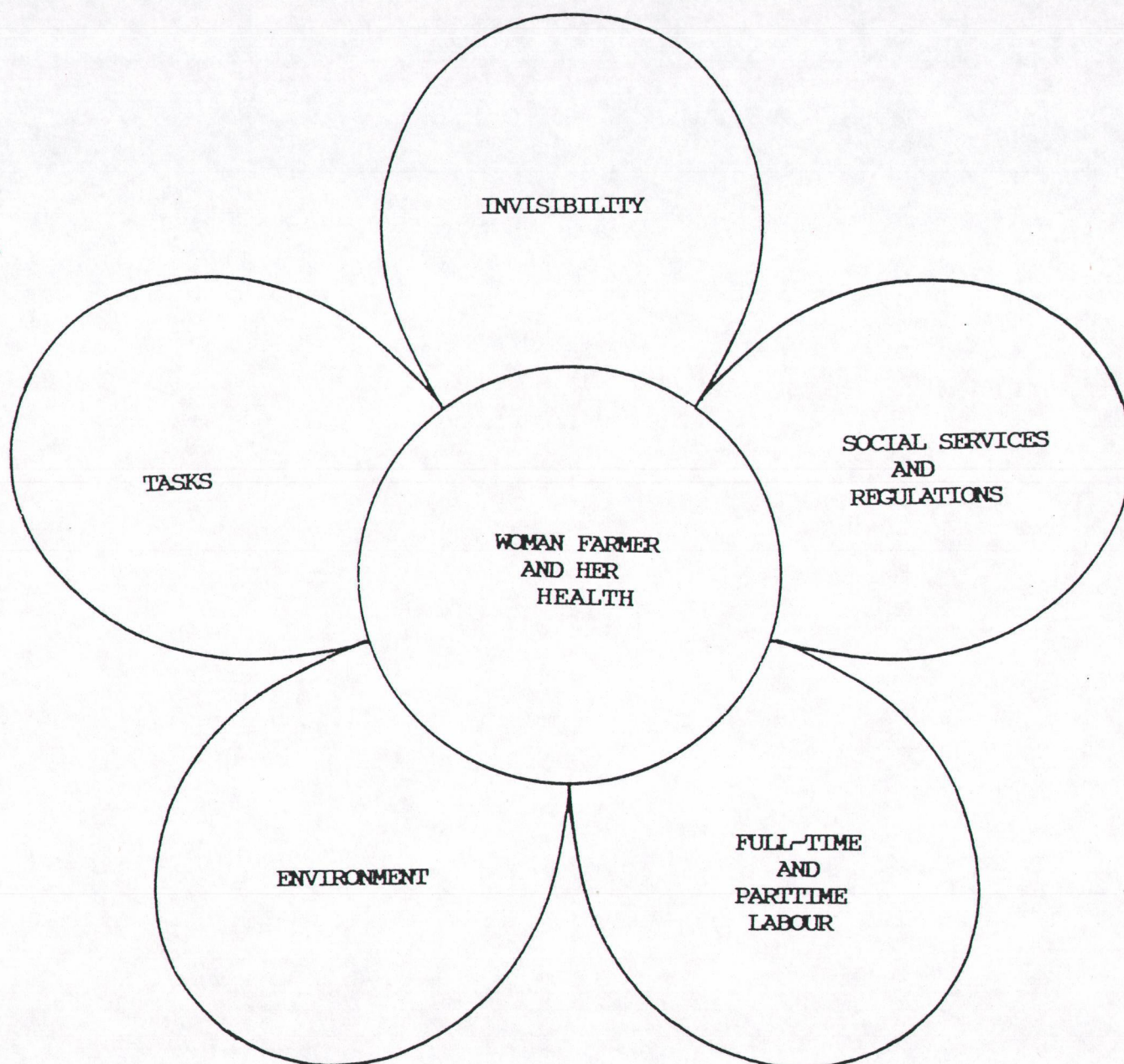
Ans Hobbelink (Science Shop)

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LITERATURE



UNSEEN IS NOT WELL

SUMMARY

As part of this year's seminar about 'The Woman farmer and her Health in the EC' an investigation was carried out to explore what occupies women in all EC countries in the field of women farmers and health. To this end an enquiry was held among all organizations associated with COPA. This was completed by a study of literature on the subject.

The health of women farmers is related to a number of factors.

One of these factors is the invisibility of women farmers and their work. A woman farmer works under great pressure and gets little appreciation for her work. This leads to physical strain and mental tensions.

Due to the invisibility of her work good provisions in case of illness and disability are lacking and she cannot be substituted. A further consequence of the invisibility is that it is often not considered necessary to make use of, for instance, pregnancy and maternity leave regulations. In most cases the existing regulations for pregnancy and maternity leave are not geared to the situation of women farmers. The same holds good for old-age provisions.

A third factor affecting the health of women farmers is part-time farming and part-time work. These occur in various forms in the EC. On the one hand they are an additional burden to women. On the other hand they tend to reveal women's work in some cases, which may lead to a higher appreciation. Moreover part-time work often improves the farming family's income and may thus reduce the mental strain on women. An additional advantage is that in some cases a woman farmer will get out of her social isolation when working outside the home.

The working and living environment is the fourth factor influencing the health of women farmers. Exposition to dangerous substances and crop protection products involves health risks and so does dealing with plants and animals which may transmit diseases. Machines affect the safety and health of the woman on the farm.

In order to improve the health and living conditions of women farmers it is of first importance that they manifest themselves. This means that they will have to be recognized by their environment and by themselves, as well as their work. Advice and education can play an important part in this process. If women are included in official statistical records social services and regulations can be geared more adequately to their

situation in a certain country. This will improve the availability of these provisions to women.

It is necessary to bring about a change of mentality by means of advice and information, so that both women and men will be convinced of the necessity of (the use of) certain regulations and social services.

Furthermore governments should pay more attention to the farming population in general. Not only to safeguard their incomes, but also to extend provisions in rural areas, such as improvements of the infrastructure, education and health care.

CHAPTER 1 THE INVESTIGATION

1.1 Introduction

This is the report of an investigation aimed to present a review of what occupies women in the EC in the field of health and women farmers.

In the first chapter the design and progress of the investigation are discussed briefly.

Certain issues and current developments emerged again and again from the investigation. In this paper they will be presented as themes, all connected to the health of women farmers. The following themes will be dealt with:

- Invisibility of women farmers (Chapter 3)
- Social services and regulations (Chapter 4)
- Part-time and full-time work of women farmers (Chapter 5)
- Environment (Chapter 6)

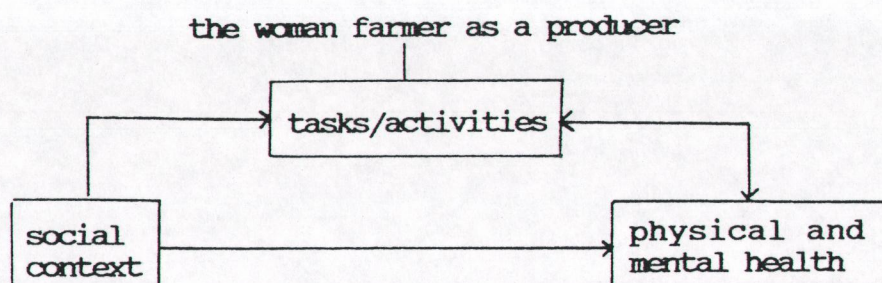
Chapter 7 deals with the conclusions.

1.2 Aim of the investigation

This investigation aims to inventory the following at the COPA organisations in all EC countries:

- 1) their opinions concerning the field of health and women farmers,
- 2) the connections between health, a woman farmer's duties and social services and regulations.

These relations are represented in the following model:



Explanation of the model

- 'Women farmers' are all the women working in the farming sector. They can hold the positions of farm heads, co-owners, employees or wives participating in a farm. Most women in the EC are participating wives. Strangely enough, their legal and social position is the most uncertain. Therefore the health situation of these women is different from other women. For that reason the results of this investigation will often refer to wives participating in farms. However, this does not exclude women in different positions.
- 'The duties of a woman farmer' involve all the activities and tasks that women farmers are expected to do, feel themselves responsible for and actually perform.
- 'Health' contains both physical and mental and well-being. With regard to physical health one can think of factors like safety, physical workload and working conditions. Mental health involves factors like job satisfaction, labour relations, conditions of employment and social developments like environmentalism and emancipation.
- 'Social context' includes the social services and regulations affecting the health of women farmers. One can think of provisions like maternity leave and the accessibility of hospitals. It also covers people's ideas on illness and health.

The investigation was carried out by means of an enquiry and a study of literature on the subject (A more detailed report of the literature that was consulted is in preparation under the title of 'Unseen is not well').

We did not aim to present a comprehensive view of the health situation of all women farmers in the EC. The results of this investigation are only meant to be used als a point of departure for the discussion at the seminar.

1.3 Progress of the investigation

It was most encouraging that nearly all enquiries were completed and returned to the Netherlands.

The literature consulted in the investigation included very diverse material, ranging from scientific reports to newspaper articles and material from informants. So far there has been very little research on

the health of women farmers. Moreover the available information varied from one country to another. Consequently not all countries will receive equally ample treatment. A report on the literature is in preparation and will be obtainable from COPA-The Netherlands.

During the investigation the contribution by the COPA working party and the Federation of Countrywomen has been of vital importance.

Before dealing with the results of the investigation it is important to mention some issues which affected the outcome to a great extent.

1. The COPA-secretariat in Brussels added some pages to the original enquiry, which resulted in a questionnaire twice as long.
2. Besides the emphasis of the enquiries was shifted from health to safety. This led to alterations in the contents.
3. When the questionnaires were translated the room for detailed reactions was cut down drastically.
4. Finally the translations of the replies to some enquiries arrived too late in the Netherlands to be fully incorporated in the research report.

As a consequence the replies to the first part of the enquiry (about what occupies women in the field of health) became a lot shorter. Moreover they were less useful to the investigation. We had to solve this by giving more emphasis to the literature. Only the original part of the questionnaires (part A, B and C of part I) has been incorporated in this report.

CHAPTER 2 HEALTH PROBLEMS OF WOMEN FARMERS

2.1 Introduction

It appears from the literature that little research has been done into the actual health situation of women farmers. Much information, however, is supplied by the enquiries.

The following health problems emerge from the enquiry and the literature.

2.2 Physical health problems of women farmers

The complaints shown by women concern the upper and lower limbs, a tingling or a numb feeling in the limbs, neck pain, back pain, muscular and joint complaints.

Many of these problems are caused by a wrong posture during work or a wrong use of materials and machines. However, the complaints are also caused by the long working hours of women farmers.

Other health problems that were mentioned: COLD (respiratory diseases), skin diseases, allergies, functional heart and circulatory disorders, high blood pressure, overweight, cardiovascular diseases and bad teeth. Work accidents were also mentioned as a frequent problem.

2.3 Mental health problems of women farmers

Psychological problems were frequently mentioned in the enquiries. They will show themselves in for instance stress, depressions and suicide, or take the form of psychosomatic complaints. This means that physical complaints are caused by psychological problems. Some women farmers have headaches or neck complaints, because they have to work under great pressure.

2.4 Background factors relating to the health of women farmers

Both in the literature (Unseen is not well, 1990) and the enquiries the health problems of women farmers in various EC countries were often related to their duties and to social services and regulations. The health

of women farmers is thus often connected with factors which are deep-seated and not always manifest. Due to this the mental as well as the physical health problems of women farmers are not always manifest.

By means of a discussion of the following four themes some of these fundamental factors will be dealt with:

- 1) invisibility (of the work of) women (Chapter 3)
- 2) social services and regulations (Chapter 4)
- 3) full-time and part-time work (Chapter 5)
- 4) social conditions and environment (Chapter 6)

It is important to trace these fundamental factors and the negative effect they have on the health of women farmers. Only if this influence is revealed and women farmers are conscious of it, they can take action to improve their health situation!!

Both the literature and the replies to the enquiry indicate how women farmers and their organizations in the various EC countries think they can protect their health interests. This will be dealt with in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 3 THE HEALTH OF WOMEN FARMERS AND THE INVISIBILITY OF THEIR WORK AND THEMSELVES AS PERSONS

3.1 Introduction

Women farmers take on a substantial part of the work in the agricultural sector. A woman farmer nearly always has a threefold task. She does the housekeeping, takes care of her family and other relatives and is responsible for part of the work in and for the farm. Besides many women farmers do voluntary work or have paid jobs to acquire an income for their own farm.

In spite of this multitude of tasks, their environment often undervalues their work, both the amount and the importance it has for the farm and the family. This also emerges from the enquiries, in which the respondents ask for recognition and appreciation of their work.

Nevertheless women farmers themselves often undervalue their own work as well. In the Danish enquiry this is put forward as follows: a woman is working all day, but at the end of the day she still has the feeling that she has not done enough yet.

There are a number of causes for the invisibility and undervaluation of the work of women farmers (Unseen is not well, 1990).

3.2 Some causes of the invisibility of women, their work and their health problems

Cause 1: The characteristics of the duties of women farmers

Due to their social position women often perform those tasks which are less visible to the outside world. For instance, in most cases women's work is unpaid: the household, taking care of their families and acquaintances, volunteer work outside the home.

The work women farmers do in the farm often includes activities for the benefit of the farm (for instance bookkeeping, answering the telephone) and to a lesser extent activities on the farm (for instance in the fields). Moreover, many tasks are in line with housework (for instance cleaning the farmyard). Consequently they are often neglected, certainly as farm work.

Women farmers seldom act in public, for instance in banking matters and insurances. This is due to the fact that in most cases male farmers only are seen as the representatives of their farms, even if in practice husband and wife consult each other on farm management. In the Netherlands for instance, important financial transactions require the signature of the farm head only, which usually is the male farmer (informant).

Cause 2: Appreciation of the work of women farmers

Due to their social position women's work is always less valued than men's work, even if it includes the same activities. Administration, for instance, is seen as an important task when done by a man. If a woman keeps the books, the work is often seen as a job on the side.

Undervaluation also appears from the phenomenon that in regions where more and more women work in agriculture the status of farming declines (informant).

Cause 3: The interwovenness of the duties of women farmers

Women farmers nearly always have a trifold task. In their activities they give priority to farm work over housework. Consequently housework has to be interrupted frequently for farm work. The tasks are interwoven. This interwovenness accounts for the fact that, in spite of long working days of 12 to 14 hours, it is not clear how much work women actually take on.

Cause 4: Women farmers as stand-ins

In addition to the many duties women farmers have, they stand in for almost all other activities, for instance when other workers drop out and in rush periods. On the other hand they themselves are hardly ever replaced or assisted. The extra work they perform as a consequence of this and the pressure it causes are not seen because it is 'only' standing in, not a regular task.

The direct consequences of the invisibility of women's work on their health are physical and mental stress. Constant pressure of work and lack of appreciation produce tensions.

3.3 Consequences of the invisibility of women farmers, their work and their health problems

The consequence of the invisibility of the work of women farmers is that they are not included in the official statistical records. For instance farmers' wives participating in their husbands' farms are not included in the agricultural labour force. There is no definition of the work done by women farmers. Being based on these official statistics, the social services and regulations of most countries are not made for women. The criteria applied in these services and regulations take no account of the work situation of women. In the Netherlands, for instance, the criterion for obtaining a disability benefit is that a woman has to work in or for the farm for 40 hours a week during 6 months. (De vrouw van de landbouw, 1988). Because of their work situation, which involves the performance of various tasks together, women farmers are seldom entitled to this benefit.

Social services and regulations are not geared to the work situation of women farmers. As a consequence women cannot be substituted when ill and are not entitled to benefits from public or private bodies. In chapter 4 this will be illustrated by two examples.

Another consequence of the underestimation and undervaluation of the amount of work done by women farmers is that farmers often think it unnecessary for a woman to be a member of a caretaker service or to take out an insurance. In the Netherlands, for instance, 89% of the women do not join a caretaker service! (Arbeid en gezondheid van vrouwen werkzaam in de agrarische sector, 1988) This is partly due to the fact that these provisions involve high expenses. The insurance of two persons is very expensive and consequently it is common for the husband to be insured but not for the wife.

A consequence of the invisibility of the health problems of women farmers is that health services are not very aware of their specific

problems. Owing to this, and the fact that farms are situated in the country, women farmers do not have easy access to health services.

3.3.1 Consequences of the absence of good provisions for the health of women farmers.

Due to the absence of social services and regulations for women farmers they are indispensable in their families and farms. Many women regard this as a heavy burden. At the same time their indispensability is not recognized by others, the large amount of work they do is not seen and women are not appreciated for it. This ambiguity is a problem to many women.

Because they cannot be spared, women keep on working when ill or pregnant. This is also caused by the fact that, on account of their indispensability, women feel overresponsible. The Dutch inquiry indicates that 68% of the women farmers continue to work when they are ill and 50% postpone to see a doctor. This holds good for Germany too, and is the reason why women often buy medicine at their own discretion (Frauen in der Landwirtschaft, 1988). In mediterranean countries indispensability does not show from visits to a doctor. In Greece, for instance, women do pay more visits to their doctors, but this has a different background. Here a visit to the doctor is one of the few legitimize reasons for a woman to leave the farm. Therefore it is also used to maintain social contacts (Unseen is not well, 1990).

As there are no good provisions for the substitution of women farmers, they cannot be spared by their families and farms. Both indispensability and lack of recognition are felt as a strain by women and affect their health. Another consequence for their health is that women farmers continue to work in case of illness, disability or pregnancy.

3.4 The vicious circle of invisibility

As appears from what has been stated above, the problem of invisibility has direct consequences for the health of women farmers.

Furthermore it has an indirect influence on health by means of the provisions and regulations concerning part-time farming. Moreover, due to their invisibility women have a specific position in the agricultural sector, which differs from the position of men. Consequently the general problems of this sector, like environmental problems and the worsening incomes of certain groups, work out more seriously for women.

In order to improve the health situation of women farmers it is of the first importance that their tasks and problems are revealed. However, the main problem is that their invisibility is a vicious circle. Exactly because women farmers are not included in statistical records, their activities and problems cannot easily be shown up.

Besides, it is difficult to get into contact with women. Because of their duties women farmers seldom act in public. Often they cannot make use of suitable courses and provisions, just because they do not have the time or money to do so.

Both men and women show resistance to the emancipation of women, as appeared from the Dutch inquiry. A Belgian enquiry stated that the fact of women laying claim to a position in the farm equal to men sometimes leads to tensions in the family. On the other hand in Luxemburg husband and wife are reported to share farm and housework equally. Moreover Luxemburg has created good fringe benefits for women.

Another main problem is that the organizations of women farmers are not very much orientated towards external activities and active promotion of their members' interests. The general farmers' organizations women are part of give low priority to the voices of women farmers. Few women hold important positions and consequently they are hardly involved in decision-making. As appeared from the Danish enquiry the lack of confidence of women farmers is also important in this respect.

Chapter 4 and 5 will deal with the effects of invisibility on social services and the regulations concerning part-time farming.

CHAPTER 4 THE HEALTH OF WOMEN FARMERS AND SOCIAL SERVICES AND REGULATIONS

4.1 Introduction

The social services and regulations existing in a country affect the health and welfare of women farmers. In a Spanish enquiry women farmers see a direct link between health problems and social services and regulations. French women farmers also see a connection. In their view the health problems prevailing in this country are related to the absence of adequate provisions for the substitution of women farmers in case of pregnancy.

In the following we will only go into the regulations concerning pregnancy leave and pension schemes of the various EC countries. Other provisions, such as caretaker services, disability benefits and health services are only indirectly dealt with, however important they may be.

4.2 Pregnancy and maternity leave regulations

The importance of good pregnancy and maternity leave regulations is corroborated by the results of a Dutch investigation. This showed a correlation between pregnancy complaints and the number of hours women worked during their pregnancy. Women over 35 were supposed to run more risk of miscarriages as they worked more hours during pregnancy. The same report indicated that women who keep doing the same amount of work during their pregnancy have complications more often than average during and after childbirth. (Arbeid en gezondheid van agrarische vrouwen werkzaam in de agrarische sector, 1988).

Most countries have made regulations for pregnancy and maternity leave by means of health and disability insurances. Caretaker services, existing in a number of countries, can provide substitutes for women in the farm.

The increasing individualization of society is leading to a growing need of all these provisions. This trend occurs in all EC member states, though in the northern countries individualization has advanced more than in the southern countries.

People no longer can and want to make an appeal for the help of neighbours and relatives. This results in an increasing need of all these services. In Portugal, which does not have a caretaker service (yet), people are in the fortunate position that they can count on relatives and friends who will stand by in case of illness or disability (De vrouw in de landbouw, 1988). On the other hand the fact that women are always ready to help their neighbours and relatives is an additional burden.

The Luxemburg enquiry calls it a positive development that an increasing number of women make use of provisions for the substitution of their farm work during pregnancy and after childbirth. This development has been made possible by legislation, combined with information and a change in the attitudes of male and female farmers.

Belgian women also mention a positive development in the enquiry. A newly created maternity bonus stimulates women farmers to take pregnancy and maternity leave. In the Spanish enquiry regulations for pregnancy and maternity leave are considered capable of improvement. In their view the same substitution regulation needs to be introduced in their country as elsewhere.

Nevertheless the countries that do have pregnancy and maternity regulations point out some shortcomings. In the Netherlands an investigation (Bevallen en opstaan, 1989) showed that women farmers cannot make adequate use of the existing regulations, because the costs of participation are very high. In this enquiry it was suggested to supply pregnancy and maternity leave regulations in kind, so directly by means of substitution. This will force women farmers to make use of the regulation.

The Dutch enquiry proposes some ideas for the improvement of these regulations. Dutch women farmers suggest to devise a scheme for pregnancy and maternity leave by means of a compulsory insurance in the shape of a social insurance or a legal allowance financed by general funds. In this way all women acquiring an income by labour will be entitled to pregnancy and maternity leave.

Luxemburg women are not satisfied either with the regulation existing in their country. Instead of the current regulation for pregnancy and maternity leave which is supplied in kind, they want a regulation in the shape of an allowance based on a minimum salary.

The Netherlands and Luxemburg appear to have different needs. In the Netherlands women want to switch to a regulation supplied in kind, whereas Luxemburg women propose a financial contribution as an

improvement of the existing regulation in kind. The reasons for this need to be examined more closely.

Good pregnancy and maternity leave regulations are of direct importance to the health of women farmers. The increasing individualization of society leads to a growing need of social services. Legislation, information and changes in mentality stimulate the use of provisions for the substitution of women farmers, so that they can actually take pregnancy and maternity leave. Evidently regulations will have to be geared to the situation in a country. The possibilities and needs of such regulations differ from country to country.

4.3 Old-age provisions

With respect to the health of older women farmers other provisions are important. They for instance have an interest in old-age provisions for the time they can no longer contribute to the work on the farm.

Traditionally the son of a farmer's wife married and moved into the parental farm with his wife. For the older woman farmer this had the advantage that her daughter-in-law took over many of her duties, so that her workload was relieved.

It appears from the literature that farmers have some difficulty in finding a wife these days (Unseen is not well, 1990).

If the young farmer does marry, it is no longer natural for his wife to participate in the farm. The reason for this is that nowadays women have often had vocational training or have jobs. Another reason why a young farmer's wife does not want to participate in the farm is the possibility of problems between herself and the older woman farmer. For many years the latter has done the farm work her way and her daughter-in-law may have her own way of working. This may lead to conflicts. The older woman has problems in leaving duties to her daughter-in-law. She has the feeling of being pushed out. On the other hand the young woman farmer feels as if she has to fight for a position in the farm (Unseen is not well, 1990).

The Greek enquiry indicates the need to lower the pensionable age and urges the necessity of higher farmers' pensions.

The daughter-in-law participating in the farm takes over duties from the older woman farmer, by which the latter's workload is reduced. The generation conflict described above may lead to psychological problems of both women. To our knowledge there are no take-over regulations including the positions of both women. Because daughters-in-law participating in farm work are becoming less common, good pensions schemes are needed, so that aging women farmers can take the opportunity to work less.

CHAPTER 5 THE HEALTH OF WOMEN FARMERS IN RELATION TO FULL-TIME AND PARTTIME LABOUR ON THE FARM, OUTSIDE THE HOME, IN THE HOUSEHOLD AND AS A SIDELINE

5.1 Introduction

It appears from the literature and the enquiries that throughout Europe many small and medium-sized farms are in dire straits. The families making a living from them have great difficulty in getting by from the yield of their farms. At worst they have to give up farming.

It also happens that they manage to keep their heads above water by means of additional earnings. This means that the family members keep working on the farm and that at least one person acquires an income 'outside the home'. The other members of the family still work full-time on the farm.

The definitions of part-time farms, part-time work outside the home and additional jobs are very different in the various countries. The various EC countries apply different criteria to part-time farming and part-time labour outside the home. Sometimes the criteria are formulated on the basis of income, sometimes on the basis of time, and sometimes on the basis of a combination of both factors. Social services and regulations are tuned to these criteria and determine who is entitled to which provision.

In some countries (Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal) a farm is called a full-time farm if the farm head (in most cases a man) works on the farm for 50 to 100% of his time (the percentage differs in the various countries).

In addition to a distinction according to the time spent on farming, Germany makes a further distinction according to income. A farm is a full-time farm if a family earns less than DM 2000 per annum with additional activities. A farm in which a family gets more than 50% of its income from other sources is called a sideline. In that case the income obtained from farming is subordinate to the earnings from other activities.

The U.K. and Denmark also make a distinction according to income. Farms are called 'main income farms' (if a family's earnings mainly derive from the farm) and 'supplementary income farms' (if the earnings

from farming are complementary) (Arbeid naast het bedrijf in de agrarische sector, 1988).

The duties of a woman farmer are split up over three spheres, namely the household, the farm and possibly a job outside the home or work which is done at home but supplies an additional income. This means that as far as time is concerned she performs all these duties part-time in order to be able to combine them. The following examples will illustrate that part-time work and part-time farming occur in a variety of situations. The consequences of these specific situations for the position of woman farmers and their health will also be dealt with. The conclusions are not universal but apply to the example they follow.

5.2 Examples of full-time and part-time work and farming

Example 1 Son working outside the home, husband working full-time on the farm as farm head

In mediterranean countries there are many labour-intensive farms. The farm is run by a multi-generation family. The old farmer and his wife both work on the farm, whereas the son works 'outside the home' (sometimes in a part-time job). The family cannot make a living out of the farm. The son's participation in the farm brings in less than his job outside the farm. The farm is run full-time by the family members remaining behind as it were. In this example one family member works outside the home in a full-time or part-time job in order to make the farm run full-time. Since, as farm head, the father is on the farm full-time, it is officially considered a full-time farm. The whole family can get by because of the additional income brought in by the son. The older woman farmer and her daughter-in-law participate in the farm, because the son's (partial) absence calls for everyone's contribution (Unseen is not well, 1990).

The older as well as the younger woman farmer are expected to contribute more of their labour. This increases their physical and mental burden. A point in favour of this form of part-time farming is that the additional income relieves their worries about the family and the farm, because the farm need not be closed down.

Example 2 Wife working outside the home, husband working full-time on the farm as farm head

Another phenomenon, found in for instance the Netherlands, is that the wife takes a part-time job outside the home in order to earn an additional income. In this case part-time work means that the wife's contribution to the family income is subordinate to the contribution supplied by the farm. In most cases she keeps on working in the farm part-time, the husband full-time. The farm is called a full-time farm. Apparently the husband's work situation is taken as the starting-point. In characterizing the farm (as full-time or part-time) the wife is left out of account (Boerinnen en tuindersvrouwen in Nederland, 1984).

The work the woman does for/in the farm remains invisible. Owing to this she does not get recognition for it. Moreover she has dual duties, which are fragmented and give her the feeling that her work is never done. She does not have a feeling of satisfaction.

Example 3 The woman earns an additional income at home

In Greece it becomes more and more common that women contribute to the survival of their farm by means of a sideline. Tourism was a solution to the dire situation of many countryside people. For a Greek woman it is not easy to work outside the home, because it is not customary for a woman to appear in public unescorted (and an escort is not always present). Therefore the term 'additional work' is appropriate here, because the

woman performs housebound tasks providing an income (De bruidsschat van de toekomst?, 1986).

In this example the woman's contribution to the family income is visible. In many cases she no longer works on the farm itself, which reduces her burden. Moreover, when taking in lodgers, her contacts with tourists partly end her social isolation. Older women too can take advantage of this because they become less dependent on their children and can earn a supplement to their pensions.

Example 4 Wife working on the farm full-time, husband absent

In north Portugal it is quite common that men leave their farms in order to work in town. As a consequence women outnumber men in agriculture. Farms are completely run by women. Nevertheless these farms are called part-time farms, according to the husband's situation. In spite of his absence he is usually registered as farm head and in the end he is in charge.

Due to this situation these farms miss out on EG subsidies, because these are only granted to farms complying with the EG definition of full-time farms. The farm head (in most cases the husband) has to be present on his farm for more than 50% of his time. Since economic reasons forced these men to look for additional earnings, such farms will become even more marginal in this way (Landbouw van Portugal na toetreding tot de EG, 1988).

Here too women's work is invisible. Although the woman runs the farm on her own it does not qualify for subsidies. As a consequence she will have to work harder yet to maintain the farm. This leads to increased mental as well as physical burdens.

Example 5 Husband earns a main income besides the farm

In Germany too there is a trend that women outnumber men in agriculture. The percentages are 60 and 40 respectively. The majority of the family holdings (80%) is run part-time. Usually the husbands have a job outside the home, while the wives keep working on the farms, sometimes assisted by mostly female relatives. Sometimes the wife too has a job. Nevertheless these farms are registered as part-time farms, because the husband's income is seen as the main income (over DM 2000) and his presence on the farm as farm head does not suffice (less than 50% of his time) (Behoud kleinschalige landbouw ligt in Duitsland heel gevoelig, 1987; Frauen in der Landwirtschaft, 1988).

The woman has a dual or threefold task (responsibility for the household and family, the farm and her own job or additional work), which overburdens her. This is not recognized because it is not visible. The fact of invisibility demotivates the woman farmer to take pleasure in her work. Stress and psychosomatic problems are the consequence.

Example 6 Wife working outside the home, independent of her husband's position

Women having a job outside the home for economic reasons often need to help with farm work as well (both duties part-time). In Denmark a farm is characterized by taking into account the number of working hours and the incomes of both husband and wife. In order to hold the legal status of a wife participating in the farm a woman has to work on it for at least 4 hours a day.

Consequences for the woman are increased duties (household, farm, job) and more mental stress due to her responsibility for raising the low income. In order to be entitled to social benefits in the event of illness, the criterion of 4 hours of farm work a day is better geared to the work situation of women than the Dutch criterion, for instance, which is 40 hours a week.

Besides economic motives there are also social reasons why women work outside the home. Influenced by emancipation, more and more women in Denmark, for instance, decide to take a job outside the home. Often these women no longer work in the farm anymore. They can be motivated by a need for more social contact. Another motive may be the need for her own social status, independent of the status of her husband and the farm (informant).

In this example the woman is in a position to make a conscious choice for a job outside the home. Work can be a way to enhance her psychological well-being. (This does not mean though, that this choice is the best solution for herself.) As a result she accepts much of the weight she takes upon herself. However, a job outside the home can increase her burden, if the household duties are not rearranged. This problem is often underestimated under the pretext of 'it was her own choice'.

CHAPTER 6 THE HEALTH OF WOMEN FARMERS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

6.1 Introduction

The growing awareness of environmental problems and pollution in the EC has consequences for the health of women farmers as well. In discussing this theme a distinction must be made between two sorts of environment:

- the direct environment of the farming family, so the immediate working and living environment, the working conditions and safety on the farm, and
- environmental pollution at a national and international level.

6.2 Safety on the farm

Farming has always had a ring of health about it, such as working in the healthy country air. Nevertheless a number of factors have developed in the direct environment of the farming family, which may have a negative effect on safety and health, for instance the presence and use of crop production products.

Some enquiries indicate that the direct environment of farmers has a negative effect on the health and safety of the farming family.

British and Belgian women farmers point to the health risks of working with dangerous substances causing allergies et cetera. Another health risk is the contact with plants and animals which may cause and transmit diseases. Thirdly, the prevention of accidents (dealing with farming machinery!) is often mentioned in the enquiries as a health problem.

A positive consequence of the growing interest in environmental conservation is the fact that the rules for the use of crop production products have been tightened. Strict standards and a ban on harmful substances can restrict health damage, such as skin disorders, allergies and cancer. All this relieves the psychological burden of women farmers, caused by the fact that their whole family may be exposed to the dangerous substances present on the farm. The inquiries state that advice and information can reduce the uncertainty about the harm done by these substances (for instance in the long term).

The enquiries also stress the importance of prevention, for instance by environmental standards and legislation. It appears from the Belgian enquiry that this country works hard on information about these issues. A vaccination programme against tetanus is being worked on. Nearly all enquiries express a need of information about these matters.

Summing up the conclusion may be drawn that strict rules for the use of crop production products are needed, as is observance of these rules. Furthermore information and advice on the right use of materials and equipment and the risks of crop production products are essential to safe working conditions and the health of the farming family.

6.3 The effects of environmental problems on the health of the farming family

The growing awareness of environmental problems has created the insight that the over-production of farm produce, the manure surpluses and the frequent use of crop protection chemicals, all due to the scale-enlargement of agricultural production and the advance of technology, are environmentally harmful. Both society and politicians put the blame on the agricultural community (Informant).

The negative image of the farmer as an environmental polluter causes severe mental strain in farming families.

Strict environmental control is imperative to restrict pollution and protect the 'great environment'. In the long term it will protect the health of society, and the health of the farming community as well. Strict environmental control will, however, increase the financial burden

of farms. In order to meet stricter requirements large investments are called for (Enquiries and newspaper De Volkskrant, 26-2-1990).

Although strict environmental requirements will no doubt have positive effects on the health of the farming community, the financial burden of the necessary investments will lead to stress and other psychosomatic problems, particularly in the families working in smaller farms.

CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Invisibility

The invisibility of women farmers and their work has a negative effect on their health. They are under strain and feel undervalued because of this invisibility. In order to do something about this men and women have to become aware of these problems. The enquiries show that in the past few years this consciousness has grown under the influence of emancipation processes. Education can contribute greatly to a growing awareness of these problems. The enquiries show that there is a great need for education. In the past few years women's organizations have set up an increasing number of courses for women, but national governments too will have to provide more training for women farmers.

The problem of invisibility is a vicious circle. In order to break out of this circle women farmers need to be more active in the promotion of their interests. Women must learn to be more self-confident in farmers' organisations. Moreover they must hold more higher positions, so that they can influence decision-making.

Another consequence of invisibility is that women farmers are seldom entitled to social benefits. The criteria for the allowance of social benefits are not geared to the specific work situation of women farmers. Their work situation is characterized by the interwovenness of three tasks of equal importance (the care for the household, family and other relatives, the farm and (voluntary) work outside the home) and do not consist of one main task, as is frequently the criterion now. In order to be entitled to social benefits and regulations new criteria will have to be formulated, which do take account of the specific work situation of women farmers. First of all women have to be included in the official statistical records, so that their specific work situation is revealed. Therefore a definition of women's work has to be drawn up. In this respect further research is needed.

7.2. Social services

Chapter 4 showed the importance of provisions for the health of women farmers. There appears to be a relation between the development of health

problems and not taking pregnancy leave. A suitable pregnancy and maternity leave regulation, tuned to the situation of women farmers in each country, is required. More research is needed in order to draw up suitable pregnancy and maternity leave regulations in each country.

Changes in the mentality of men and women are needed so that women will make use of pregnancy and maternity leave regulations. Therefore advice and information on the importance of taking pregnancy leave and the possibilities it offers is necessary.

7.3 Take-over regulations

Another situation having a negative effect on the health of women farmers is the uncertainty about the positions of the older and younger woman farmer in the event of a farm take-over. This situation may lead to tensions between both women. A take-over regulation which includes the positions of both the older and the younger women farmer will improve this situation. The importance of this regulation will have to be shown. This question too is related to an increased consciousness of women farmers and the promotion of their interests.

7.4 Old-age provisions

The existence and availability of old-age provisions affect the health of women farmers as well. Like all workers the older woman farmer has a right to a good pension scheme. Like the provisions mentioned above this should be tuned to the specific work situation of women farmers. A positive development mentioned in the Greek enquiry is that women farmers are entitled to a pension independent of their marriage.

7.5 Official recognition

In addition to revealing the proportions of the duties of women farmers, the official recognition of their position as assisting wife as professional status is needed. This is required in order to get formal control, for instance over financial transactions, or to obtain subsidies. Women working full-time on their farm, but not recognized as

farm heads miss out on EG subsidies because their husbands as business heads are absent. Therefore the criteria for subsidy should be tuned better to the specific work situation of women farmers (see example 4 part-time farming).

7.6 Environmental legislation

The use of crop protection products is a health risk for farmers. Strict regulations are required in order to increase safety on the farm. Existing rules ought to be observed better. The farming community needs to become aware of these risks so that it can protect itself against them. Advice is important in this respect.

Safety regulations also serve the purpose of environmental protection. On the long term this too is of first importance to the health of farmers, and therefore of women farmers as well. The capital outlays which these protection measures involve are now shifted on to the farmer as a producer, which imposes a heavy financial burden on farmers. In many cases this also leads to health problems. However, the whole society should bear the costs of environmental measures, because both consumers and producers are responsible for environmental pollution.

Moreover research into the applicability of ecologically sound farming methods is needed. In this respect governments should pursue an incentives policy taking account of the income level of farmers.

7.7 Troublesome income positions

The troublesome income positions of many farms have effects on the health of women farmers. Many enquiries show that their continuous worrying about the farm income causes mental problems. Farmers endure many problems to maintain their farms. Many women help in the farm or have an additional income to maintain their family's income level. Another possibility of gaining enough income is part-time farming, in addition to a main income, as is common in Germany. One has to take care, however, that part-time farming does not mean a heavier burden to women.

Moreover in formulating and applying criteria for part-time farming the position of both men and women should be taken into account.

Finally it is wrong to have a condescending attitude to part-time farming.

7.8 Government attention

A demand for government attention is heard in many enquiries. National governments should pay more attention to the general situation of the farming community. Not only to safeguard their incomes, but also to increase the level of services in rural areas, such as improvements in the infrastructure, communication networks, schools and health care. In the enquiries from Spain, Portugal and Greece the expansion of health services in rural areas is mentioned as a positive development. In addition to this, however, it is necessary to improve their accessibility to women. An Italian investigation showed that better information and contact by means of intermediaries promotes the health of women farmers. This resulted in the proposal to appoint intermediaries in health centres, promoting the health interests of women farmers.

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